

JAN 31 1940

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Gay Perennials



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Decorative Fabrics of Distinction

STROHEIM & ROMANN

730 FIFTH AVENUE - at 57th Street - NEW YORK

CHICAGO
Heyworth Bldg.

BOSTON
Berkeley Bldg.

PHILADELPHIA
Finance Bldg.

LOS ANGELES
Story Bldg.

SAN FRANCISCO
Jeweler's Bldg.



*Toile de Jouy showing Chinese grotesques—Impressions
from a wood block, designed during the
reign of Louis XV*



HOW refreshing in their charming variety are the unpretentious chintzes, whose enchanting and colorful patterns so endear themselves to every home decorator. They are like the hardy, gay perennials, which bloom in our gardens, and which all may possess.

IT WAS not always so. Each painted hanging, each "chint", as it was called by the Hindu, which was displayed by the fashionable dames in England or in France, was enhanced by some tale of romantic adventure. Its glowing colors and intricate "tree of life" pattern had been patiently delineated by Hindu craftsmen working "similar to the crawling of snails". It had rounded the Cape of Good Hope in some daring trading vessel of the enterprising East India Company. Perchance it had to be smuggled in, if it had come into the fair lady's possession after the year 1700. Any

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discerning person could, by an imperceptible sniff, detect these genuine painted cottons from those which were being turned out of the picturesque little workshops which, since 1676, had been springing up in the vicinity of the Thames.

WITH the reign of William and Mary, the final stamp of approval was placed upon decorative cottons, when the queen herself had her bed hung with "Atlass" curtains. Defoe, a contemporary writer of the period, says that these fabrics were not only used as "carpets" (table covers) and "quilts," but that they had "*crept into our houses, our closets, and bed chambers; curtains, cushions, chairs, and at last beds themselves were nothing but callicoes and Indian stuffs.*"

LAWS prohibiting the importation of painted cottons, and excise taxes on the domestic product, which were instigated by the silk and woolen manufacturers, but increased their vogue. When domestic manufacture was also forbidden, riots became frequent in the streets of London. Invec-

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tives were hurled back and forth by those interested. One piece of chintz from India was described as being a "tawdry, pie-spotted, flabby, ragged, low priced thing . . . made by a parcel of Heathens and Pagans that worship the Devil and work for a half-penny a day."

WHEN it finally became evident that such stringency effected no good, prohibitory laws were repealed and England settled down to a period of undisturbed activity in the manufacture of these popular fabrics. Laborious processes of the wood block were superceded by the more expedient method of copper plate and cylinder printing.

ALL through the 18th century chintzes were extensively used in England by the upper classes for furnishing purposes. The designers of the Georgian period were quick to recognize their decorative value. While Chippendale and Sheraton nowhere recommended their use in print, it is undoubtedly because it was not safe at that time to do so. In the book of Hepplewhite's



Toile de Jouy, showing medallions and cartouches from the antique.
Impressions from a copper-plate, designed, by Huet.
Empire period, with the sphinx showing the
influence of Napoleon's Egyptian
campaign.

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designs, published by his widow, frequent references are made to printed cotton.

PATTERNS which at first had been frankly oriental, exact imitations as far as possible of the imported cottons, toward the middle of the century took a bold departure. Pastoral and figure subjects, which reflected subtle changes in social ideals, Chinese fantasies, which were far from being Chinese, and classical landscapes, which deftly suggested an appreciation of the cult of the antique, were printed in one color and were immensely popular. The stripe, too, either plain or floral, was used in England long after the influence of Louis XVI had ceased to be felt in France.

ENGLISH enthusiasts did not confine their purchases to cottons of their own manufacture. The great Oberkampf, in which magic name is summed up the whole story of the remarkable success of the French product, made a special bid for English patronage.



English chintz of the Georgian period. Such
chintzes were printed in full color.

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IN FRANCE, chintzes had experienced practically the same handicaps as in England. Following their popular reception, importation and manufacture were forbidden by law until 1759. In that, or the preceding year, Oberkampf, then a youth of 19, set up a small workshop for the manufacture of printed cottons at Jouy, near Versailles. His father and grandfather had been printers and dyers in Germany, and he was well equipped for his work.

OVERKAMPF both lived and worked in his tiny little shop, but the fabrics printed from the blocks which he designed, and cut, met with success, and the "*toiles de Jouy*" soon became the vogue. Fifteen hundred workmen were in his employ. To them he gave houses, hospitals, and old age pensions. The Queen Marie Antoinette was immensely pleased with his creations. Louis XVI visited his plant and ennobled him, and the Royal Arms were added to the stamp of his firm.

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THE Revolution cramped Oberkampf's industry as it did practically every industry in France. In 1709, the sudden revival in the demand for cotton fabrics, which were in keeping with the new vogue for simplicity, kept his workshops open, but taxes were increasingly exorbitant and prosperity seriously impaired. During the period of the Empire, the *toiles de Jouy* continued to enjoy favor. Napoleon did not fail to recognize the importance of Oberkampf and his industry. "You and I", he said, "make war against the English; you by your industries and I by my arms." "But," he added, "it is you who do it best."

WITH all these changing events, patterns, too, had changed considerably. The earliest of Oberkampf's designs were "Chinoiseries" printed in red. A few years later patterns of the single colored prints became more varied, and included landscapes and pastoral scenes. Still later, classical subjects and contemporary historical scenes, inspired by the French Revolution and the American War of Independence, became popular.

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YEARS of strife were hard on industry. Oberkampf's cylinders were silenced and his loyal workmen dispersed. The year that the Emperor met his defeat at Waterloo, Oberkampf died, a broken hearted old man. Twenty-eight years later, his shops at Jouy were torn down and demolished.

MOST of us today cannot be fortunate enough to possess one of the pungent odored hangings of the Far East, nor yet one of the Oberkampf originals, but we are fortunate—in that we inherit from them a wealth of charming patterns. Reproductions of these delightful fabrics are always a portion of the Stroheim & Romann collection, either in gay chintzes or dignified hand blocked linens. The characteristics which popularized them in the eighteenth century are equally conspicuous in those of today.



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